



Mid-Cities Commodore Club

Dallas/Ft. Worth

December 1989

MCCC NEWS

Volume 7 Issue 12

The President's Quarters

Jack DeTore

This will be the last quarterly report I'll be making as 1989 MCCC president. It's aimed at not only our members, but prospective members, local dealers and Amiga developers including Commodore Business Machines, Inc.. This time, the look back will span the year rather than just the past quarter. The look ahead is as far as we care to make it.

WHERE FROM?...

Our Charter - What we, as a group of Commodore computer owners and enthusiasts, have as an objective includes: to provide an educational, recreational, and self-improvement interest in computers through activities, communication and training among its members. Let's see how we fared.

Accomplishments '89 - During the past year we identified the areas of talent represented by our members' interests: computer art and music, video, animations, games, and business presentations to name a few. What's more, we provided one-on-one workshops where members could learn more about these areas.

We held regular monthly meetings in five chapters at various locations in the Metroplex so that developers and members could discuss and demonstrate new products. For special events, our Spring Thing in April featured desktop publishing and our METCOM*89 in October featured computer art and desktop video. We manned a booth at the DFW AmiFORUM in May and saw many of our local as well as out-of-state developers and dealers show their wares. Our Christmas Party plans have been launched for Dec. 2 and it's going to feature just plain fun. At all of these events our club libraries of Amiga and 64/128 public domain software are available to the members.

Our methods of communication include event and product reviews, ads, and announcements in the newsletter between members, developers, dealers, and prospective members. Currently, the club BBS is a terrific communication link among members via E-mail, and also

offers access to Public Domain software and Shareware. It's a great club service upgraded this year with a new Amiga 2000 server to keep up with the growing BBS traffic. The club sysops are on the lookout for ANY software anomalies and review what gets on the lines to guard against pirated files, improper uploads, or viruses as carefully as they can. Fortunately, we seem to have members with a mature outlook about this behavior who don't feel the need to mess with that stuff.

People - This last quarter MCCC officers and those of SCOPE brought Amiga and CBM personalities to the Metroplex. Jay Miner, father of the Amiga, spoke and rapped with members and developers at METCOM*89 and Gail Wellington, head of CBM Product Support, fielded questions on just about anything at InfoMart in November. These accomplishments are due to not only to MCCC members but also to those at SCOPE, and to local dealers and developers who care. Somehow, this approach is hitting a responsive chord among prospective members. Although membership of the club had dropped by midyear it has now turned around and we are adding another chapter ... Amiga North Dallas. We will finish the year with six chapters and a growing enrollment. This officer for one would like to thank you all for the growing teamwork in the Metroplex area.

WHERE TO?...

Do It Better - Yes, we've met our charter's objective in 1989 but it's tough to keep up the action. The consumer price index has gone up around 20% since our dues were established in 1984 yet we have managed to increase our responsiveness to the club's objectives. It has taught us an important lesson in efficiency: how to stay within our means. By improving our forecasting, we should better be able to assess our needs for meeting and special events rental space, club equipment, and newsletter circulation growth. By inviting dealers and developers to sign up for METCOM*90 booths early, we could: 1) see our way clear

....Continued on Page 5



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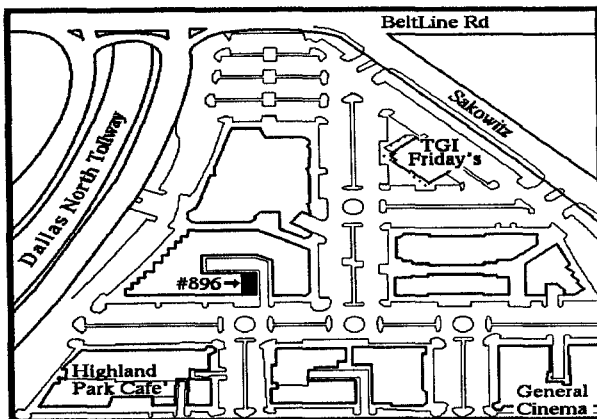
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1541 Disk Drive Secrets (Part 1)

C64 Hardware Information by John Ware
Mid-Cities Commodore Club

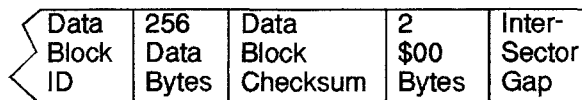
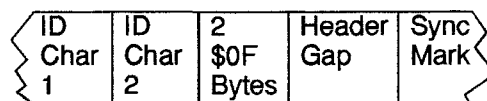
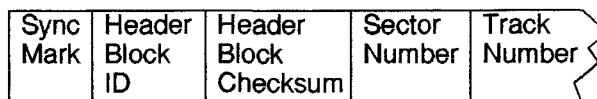
How many times have you scratched a file or program by accident and wished you could undo the scratch? Have you ever wanted to change the disk name on a disk full of programs? Do you wish that there was an easy way to "fix" a program or file on a disk so it could not be erased? Have you ever had a disk go bad causing you to lose the ONLY copy of a text file that you have worked on for hours? When was the last time you did a short "new" to a disk then discover that the only copy of your masterpiece was on that disk? All of us have made one or more of these mistakes at one time or another. If you haven't, your time will come!

There are utilities that allow you to fix most of these problems if you could only find them. There is not a single utility that I am aware of that will undo a short "new" but you can usually recover your files if you understand how the 1541 drive keeps track of things. We all know that a floppy is just a circle of plastic with a coating that can be recorded on, but how does the drive "know" where to find things, and why does a disk have to be formatted before it can be used? The answer to both of these questions relates to what formatting does to the floppy. The information on a floppy is actually recorded in a series of circles called "tracks" on the disk instead of one continuous path like a record. A normal 1541 disk will have 35 of these tracks but the drive is capable of writing and reading 80 tracks! Anything over 35 tracks is not possible using the built in disk operating system. The operating system of the 1541 drive is in the drive, not in the computer. As a matter of fact, the 1541 drive contains a small 6502 microprocessor based computer almost as powerful as the 64!

Each of these tracks is divided into smaller pieces called "sectors". There are 21 sectors on tracks 1 through 17, 19 on tracks 18 through 24, 18 on tracks 25 through 30, and 17 on tracks 31 through 35. The tracks number from 1 on the outside to 35 on the inside. The sectors number from 0 to one less than the number on a track. Why do tracks start numbering at 1 and sectors start at 0? The reason is in the way the drive keeps track of the track and sectors. The details will be explained later. Commodore chose to use this "weird" non-standard way of dividing up the tracks for greater reliability. If all the tracks had the same number of sectors, the inside ones would be shorter than the outside ones and the data bits would be closer together making them had to read and be more likely to cause read errors. In fact, I know of no more reliable 5 1/4 format around! Strange as it may seem, there are sound reasons behind the way Commodore does things.

What a format really does is write data to the disk in a very controlled pattern for each sector on a track in one continuous data stream for the entire track. At the start of each sector a sector header is written. This header has the current sector, track numbers, the disk ID, and checksum characters. This is followed by a few other bytes to provide

a short gap before writing the actual data block followed by a checksum for the data. A few more bytes are written to provide a gap before the next sector. The actual pattern for a single sector is shown below.



As a result, far more than 256 bytes per sector is actually on a disk. The sector header is NEVER changed again, unless you do a long format on the disk. Why waste data space on the disk for headers if they are not used? They ARE used every time the disk is read or written to, but only by DOS as a check to see if the sector is really the correct one desired. As a point of interest to those who like details, the little 3/16" hole is not used by a 1541 drive for anything. If you have a PC or clone, block the hole and try to read or format the disk. The disk will NOT format, nor can it be read. I will leave it up to you to figure out why.

Why divide up the floppy in sectors anyway? Because if it wasn't divided up in some way it would be an all or nothing thing. The 64 only has 64K of memory and a good part of this is used by things such as the screen and the BASIC ROMS so there is much less memory space available for your use. A 1541 format floppy can hold about 169K worth of data, far more than available in the 64's memory space. By dividing the floppy up in sectors or blocks, smaller blocks of data can be accessed. These blocks hold 256 bytes, small enough to be used, but not so small so as to waste time reading and writing small amounts of data. If you add up all of the sectors on each track you will get 683 blocks but only 664 show up on a directory. Is the directory lying or does DOS add them up in some strange way?

The difference has to do with the disk directory. There MUST be some space set aside for the directory. Track 18 is used for the directory and a few other things by DOS. Track 18 has 19 sectors or blocks, That is where the missing 19 blocks are. DOS wants TOTAL use of this track and will not add the 19 blocks to the blocks available count. In fact, you cannot access track 18 for any reason unless you

go about it using the direct access commands. Utilities such as *Directory Assistance* (in the club library) allow you to change the directory in several ways without really knowing how the directory is laid out on the disk. The 1541 directory allows only 144 files. Why? 18 of the 19 blocks are directory data blocks. Each has space for 8 file or program names. 18 times 8 gives 144. If you divide 664, the number of usable data blocks, by 144 you get 4.6 blocks. DOS will not let you have part of a block, it only understands whole numbers. Very few files are under 5 blocks so the 144 file limit does not cause problems, except in some rare cases.

The remaining sector on track 18 has several very important uses. One is something called the BAM (Block Allocation Map). The BAM is a table of the location of sectors used on the disk. The information is stored by the bit, one for each sector. Every time a sector is used or freed up the corresponding bit will be updated. If this table gets messed up for some reason, you can loose files. Every time you scratch or write a file to the disk, DOS will update the BAM. A quick check is to add up the block count for files and the free block count given by the directory. This total will always be 664 if the block allocation table is correct. DOS adds up the free blocks and reports this as the blocks free. If the count shown by DOS does NOT add up to 664, use the DOS validate command BEFORE writing anything else to the disk. Sometimes you will get something called a "splat" file. These will have an asterisk (*) next to the file type. DO NOT scratch these files. If you do, the BAM will get messed up and can result in lost files. Use the validate command to fix the problem.

ONE EXCEPTION: DO NOT VALIDATE COMMERCIAL DISKS!! Commercial programs sometimes use the BAM as part of their copy protection and the results are not predictable. In fact, it is not a good idea to change anything on the disk unless instructed otherwise by the program instructions.

DOS also uses locations in this sector for the disk name and ID given in the format command, the DOS version, and format type used on the disk. Unless you change the disk ID with some utility, this disk ID will be the same as the one in the sector headers. DOS does give errors if the disk ID here is different than the ID in the sector headers. Because the 1541 is actually a complete computer, and that DOS is in the drive, it is possible to change the way DOS acts. In fact, most copy protected programs do this.

If you have a sector editor, load it up and look at track 18, sector 0. You will see something like:

```
00: 12 01 41 00 FF FF FF FF . . A . . . .
08: FF FF FF FF FF FF FF FF . . . . .
    and more lines as above
90: 31 35 29 31 20 54 45 53 1 5 4 1   T E S
98: 54 20 44 45 4D 4F A0 A0 T   D E M O . .
A0: A0 A0 54 44 A0 32 41 A0 . . I D . 2 A .
A8: A0 A0 A0 00 00 00 00 00 . . . . .
A9: 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 . . . . .
    and more lines of 00
F8: 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 . . . . .
```

At first glance this may look like some strange

language. Actually it is a hex number representation of the bytes on this sector. If you do not understand the hex number system, there is a disk in the library that will teach it to you. Hex numbers are nothing more than a base 16 number system. The actual data on your disk will be different but it is where the byte is that determines what it is.

The first two numbers on a line, followed by ":" is the address of the data starting at the first byte (00). On the first line, the first two bytes are 12 01. This is the next track and sector of the file. The directory is just a special file to DOS and is no different than any other files as far as the sector links are concerned. If you convert the 12 in hex to the common decimal number you get 18. This tells DOS that the next sector in the file is located on track 18, sector 1.

The third byte will always be 41, the letter A in hex for a disk formatted on a 1541 or the old 4040 drive. Other formats will give different numbers. This byte tells DOS how the disk is formatted. The fourth byte, currently 00, is reserved for future use by Commodore DOS.

Next is the BAM. These run from 04 through 8F hex. In the sample above, these are all FF. In the BAM there is a SINGLE bit for each sector starting at track 1, sector 0 and so on until all sectors are bit mapped. If a sector is used, the bit for that sector will be set to a 1. In the above sample, all block bits have been set to 1. DOS would see all blocks used and give a "0 blocks free" message in the directory in spite of what the block counts for any files add up to, so nothing could be written to this disk. If you check this area on a fresh formatted disk the only bits set to 1 would be the ones for track 18, sectors 0 and 1.

Next comes the disk name starting at address 90 hex. There will always be 16 characters in the disk name. If less than 16 are supplied by the format command, DOS will add shifted spaces (A0) to the disk name to fill out the 16 bits. If you want to change the disk name, just change these bits and write the sector back to the disk.

After the disk name is the disk ID supplied by the format command. In most cases this will be the same as the one in each sector header. Normally DOS expects all of the header ID's and this ID to be the same. Some copy protections have one or more of the header ID's set different. The header ID is difficult to change but it can be done with a special sector editor known as a GCR sector editor. Maverick V3 has a good one. The next byte is another shifted space (A0). The next two bytes are the DOS version number and another copy of the disk format type. This is followed by two more shifted spaces.

The remainder of the sector is not normally used in any way by DOS and is available for any use. I have found different things here from time to time. One neat use is to place a message here. One of the best ones was one that said "This disk was stolen from XXXXX!". It is also a good place to put passwords and other data. One BASIC program I ran across required specific data that was stored in this area. It had a short ML program that used the direct access commands to get the data. You could file copy the program but unless you also got the data in the last half of this block, it WOULD NOT run! A neat way to protect a program from being changed and allow easy copying.

World Geography

C64 Software Review by Jim Lutter

From the Newsletter of the Fresno Commodore User Group

When I have to put this program back in my file I'm not sure where to put it. Should I file it with the games or should it go with the education disks? This is by far one of the best geography education programs around. Not only is it educational but it is fun at the same time.

This program was demonstrated at the August Thursday night meeting and was enjoyed by all. The graphics are superb in displaying a rotating globe of the Earth which stops with a blinking cursor on the capital of the country the quiz question is going to be about. The globe takes up the upper right half of the screen, on the upper left is an enlarged portion of the earth with three to five countries displayed with the capital of the selected country blinking. In the lower portion of the screen is a list of quiz topics which remain the same for each country in the program. These topics are Country, Capital, Currency, Language and Population. Don't be alarmed, the questions are made somewhat less difficult by the fact that they are multiple choice. Below the quiz topics is a selection of three answers, one of which is correct.

The object of the game is to not only guess the correct answer but to select it in the least amount of time. Points are awarded in a time decreasing manner, the faster the correct answer is selected the more points are awarded. The game is based on a five country quiz with a bonus flag question and two more countries awarded at 10,000 points. The game is over when there are no more countries left. The bonus flag questions are anything but easy unless you

make a habit of studying flags of the world. You are presented with a country and must select one of three flags. I guess it would be easier if I paid more attention during the country quiz as the flag of each country is also displayed above the globe.

At the beginning of the game you are presented with the option of choosing certain geographical areas such as America and Asia, Eurasia, Africa and All. There is an option of playing in one of three modes: Novice, Intermediate and Expert; with the time/point ratio being the main difference between modes. The game also has an option of One Player, Two Player and Review. Review is an option in which the computer displays the country with the correct answers. The game can be played either with the keyboard or the joystick. I found the keyboard was the best way for me as you can immediately select the correct answer (1, 2, or 3), rather than moving the joystick from one choice to the next, but that was just my preference. Obviously if you are playing two players, it would be much easier with two joysticks rather than passing the keyboard.

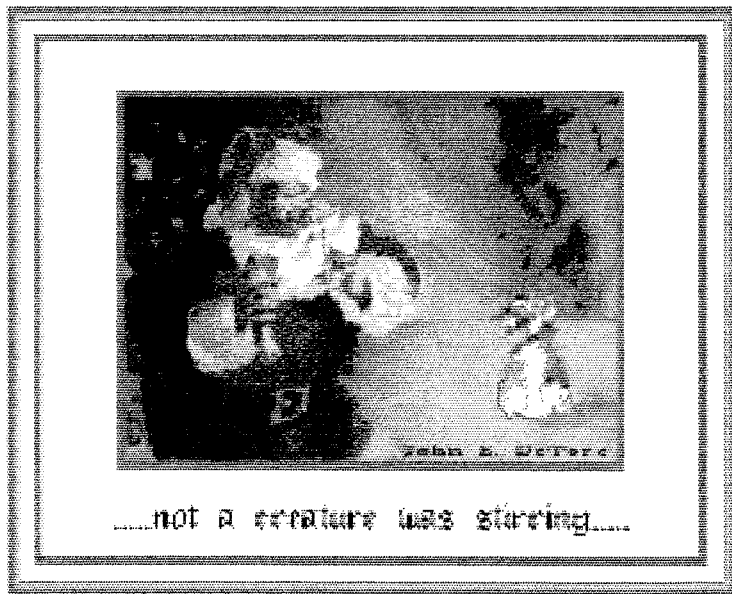
World Geography 1989 (it is updated each year) would easily rate a 9 for graphics, and a 10 for playability, for being very easy for most ages. Documentation rates a 10 -- even though it is only two pages long, everything is presented in a logical and easy to understand fashion. I would have to give World Geography an overall rating of 10 because its excellent entertainment and educational value are among the very best for the Commodore computer.

The President's Quarters

(Continued From Page 1)

to provide the best guest speakers by giving them plenty of advance notice, and 2) effectively advertise who's coming. This year, for example, a national magazine, *Amazing Computing*, mentioned in one of their feature articles the plans for METCOM*89 but the information we provided had to be released three months earlier . . . before we could be certain of who would come. Better forecasting should be able to help us decide just how active we want to be and whether we can be!

People - I believe that our club has evolved a sound way of working and has developed a flexible structure for supporting a wide user-group base. Best of all, it gives those who want to participate in any of the club and chapter activities the opportunity to "do it better". This kind of spirit renews itself. This kind of spirit keeps up the best ingredient of all . . . a membership that's a great bunch of people.



New Stuff I Just Got

Amiga Software Reviews by Bill Raecke
Mid-Cities Commodore Club

I did something different this month. Something almost unheard of for me. I bought a couple of new games and actually opened them within a week or so. This month you'll get to read my opinions on two games that are hot off the presses.

It Came From the Desert by Cinemaware

When I was a kid growing up in the '50s, "giant bug" movies were all the rage. It seemed that giant bug movies were at the local theaters almost every weekend. I and all the other kids I knew loved them all. Maybe that's why I like this game so much - it takes me back to my childhood.

"As you will soon discover, the meteor brought with it giant ants which threaten the survival of the town - and perhaps the world."

Whatever the reason, I do like this game. Like all Cinemaware adventures, this one places you in a starring role in a movie scenario. Your actions in the movie determine the course of events. In this one, you play the role of Dr. Greg Bradley. You have moved to the town of "Lizard Breath" to study the meteorite fragments in the surrounding desert. A week before the story begins, a giant meteor crashed into the nearby mountains and you are anxious to study it. As you will soon discover, the meteor brought with it giant ants which threaten the survival of the town - and perhaps the world.

Here's the way it works. The story begins on June 1, 1951. You have 15 days in which to stop the ants before they destroy the town. Each second of real time is equivalent to one minute in the game. There are some things that cause time to move more quickly, however. For example, you will move from point to point within the town and the surrounding areas. The moving is done immediately, but the game clock will be advanced by the amount of time that it took to get there. If you are not careful, entire days can be used up traveling aimlessly from location to location. Days tend to be rather short to begin with. In Lizard Breath, the sidewalks are rolled up promptly at the end of the business day. After this time, interaction with other townsfolk is very limited. You must also get a good night's sleep each night (at least seven hours) or you will become so exhausted that you will fall asleep at the wheel of your car (or something equally embarrassing) and wind up in the hospital. To save time, it is usually much more profitable to use the telephone to get an idea of where

to go next.

The idea is to try to gather the support of the local mayor and other townspeople in your fight against the giant ants. For some reason they are not quick to believe your story. You must convince them by collecting evidence. The evidence you collect can be the accumulation of sightings and other indirect evidence from other sources and it can be physical evidence. Physical evidence can be 1) a cast of an ant track, 2) a recording of the sounds of the creatures, 3) a sample of fluids from the creature, or 4) a creature part. Any sample collected must be taken to the laboratory for analysis. When the results of the analysis are returned, they can be taken to the mayor to try to convince him to act.

Of course, obtaining evidence is not without its hazards. For one thing, there is a local gang called the Hellcats whose favorite pastime seems to be the game of "Chicken". For those too young to know, the game of chicken consists of two cars heading straight toward each other on a highway. The first to swerve (chicken out) loses. This is a great way to wind up in the hospital. Other neat ways to end up in a hospital include unsuccessful firefighting, knife fights, the aforementioned "falling asleep at the wheel" and, of course, encounters with giant ants. The good news is that, in the early stages of the game, none of these injuries is fatal. The bad news is that you will wind up in the hospital for a one or two day stay where you will waste valuable time while the ants continue to multiply and prepare to destroy the town. Of course you could always (try to) escape from the hospital. If you choose this option, another action sequence is brought up. The goal is to try to escape from the hospital while avoiding (hiding from) the nurses, doctors and orderlies on duty. If you fail, they will tranquilize you and strap you into your bed for the remainder of your stay to keep you from trying anything so foolish again.

To win the game you will eventually have to locate the ant nest and enter it alone with just a single load of explosives, a rope, and a flame thrower. Failure at this level results in death -- there are no injuries here. If you have not accomplished this by June 15, the ants will attack the town. If you can fight off the first wave, you can gain time to enter the nest and destroy the queen. If this has not been accomplished by midnight on the 15th, the game is over and you have lost.

As with most of my reviews, I have just hit the high spots. I could go on and on as some magazine reviews do but I fail to see the point. The description will not equal the game play in any case. If my brief review sounds at all interesting, buy it. As far as I am concerned, this is the best Cinemaware adventure to date. The graphics are probably not as good as some others have been, but the game play and story are a lot of fun.

PocoMan by Designing Minds

If you are familiar with *Boulder Dash* on the C64 or *Emerald Mines* on the Amiga, then you are familiar with the general concept of PocoMan -- kind of. PocoMan has removed the mine motif and the action portions of the game. What is left is pure strategy -- and pure fun.

You have a set of rooms with walls and openings in the walls. Within the rooms are a set of objects. Some squares on the floor are marked with X's. The idea is to move the objects within the rooms so that they are on the squares marked with X's. Sounds easy doesn't it? The problem is that in order to move the objects you must push them with your PocoMan character. (PocoMan can be controlled with the keyboard, mouse or joystick as you prefer.) The key word here is "push". PocoMan can only push one object at a time. He must also be able to get "behind" it in order to push it. This means that it cannot be up against the wall or another object.

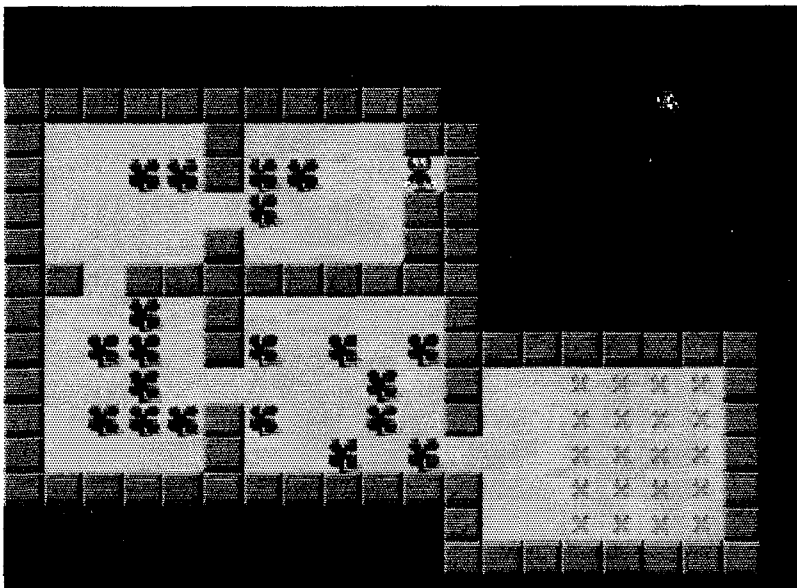
One of the more important menu options is "Restart Level". You will find yourself using this one often when you find yourself in a position where you are unable

to continue. Another important option is the "Undo". This will undo only the last push, but it is invaluable in those instances when your fingers don't do what you tell them to do. The menus have keyboard equivalents which is handy for those using the keyboard to play (which I do when playing this game).

The game has fifty levels. You cannot move to the next level until you have successfully completed the current one. The game stores the names of players and the last level completed for each player so that the game can be shut down and re-started without requiring that you retrace your steps. It also multi-tasks beautifully. You can play while waiting for a big file to download from the BBS or while

waiting for your program to compile. The fact that there is no action aspect to the game makes interruptions painless. One more thing -- there is no copy protection. It can easily be put on a hard drive.

I wholeheartedly recommend this game. I have already spent quite a few hours playing and I will spend much more. It is well worth the money you will spend. Buy it!



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My 9600 BAUD Modem

Impressions and Comments by Johnny C. Kitchens
Mid-Cities Commodore Club

1989 was a busy year for my computer. Definitely the most active yet in many ways. When the year started I was using a 1200 baud modem and I was very happy with it. Then I recieved an ad in the mail telling of a special price on a 2400 baud modem. It was February and I was stuck indoors due to the cold so I went and bought one. The performance difference was great. My file transfer time was cut greatly. I was very happy. Then in July when it was very hot and I was stuck indoors again, I recieved word on a bargain on another modem. A USRobotics Courier HST modem. It was July 4th and I took a look. The fireworks flew and I came home with a new modem.

"One very impressive feature of the case is that all the commands for the modem are printed on the bottom..."

The HST modem is an impressive sight compared to other modems, even when not in operation. It looks to be nearly four times the size of other familiar modems. So big in fact I added a shelf to the side of my limited desk just for the modem. It measures 8 1/8" wide, 1 5/8" tall, and 12 1/2" long. It's all black with silver trim and writing. The LED's are the largest I've seen on a modem, and can be definitely seen. The HST has an easy to reach volume control at the front of the modem, though once you set it you will probably never need to set it again. One very impressive feature of the case is that all the commands for the modem are printed on the bottom, for that time when you need a special command and have misplaced the manual. The manual bears mentioning due to the fact that the manual is more like a book than the familiar soft bound paperback of other equipment you may be familiar with. The manual comes in a rather nice vinyl and cardboard heavy bound style book. USRobotics really convinced me of quality in every way. A 2 year limited warranty is icing on the cake for this piece of equipment -- Especially in this day of 90 day warranties.

Performance is what this modem is all about and it delivers. Though this modem is capable of throughput of 17,400bps when communicating with other MNP (error control modems) equipped modems, all of my operations have been at 9600 since all the files have been compressed with an archiving utility such as Arc, and I am not able to utilize data compression built into the HST. I'm happy with what I got as it is. The first performance improvement I noticed is the total elimination of line noise problems. Several boards had severe line noise problems. They were 2400 capable BBS's, but I had to use 1200 to get away from line noise. After hooking up the HST, no more line noise since.

Here are the numbers for comparison purposes. I uploaded a file to three different boards. One a 2400, the other two 9600. One board has been recently optimized and I was able to get some very impressive transfer rates there. The other 9600 BBS is set to more conventional settings, though I'm sure he is about to do some adjustments there. I used a file that consisted of 337429 bytes and I got the following.

2400 baud	25.45 minutes at 221cps
9600 baud	6.02 minutes at 934cps
9600 baud	4.66 minutes at 1205cps

1205 characters per second is fast. Less than 1 second to transfer a 1K block of data. I was using Zmodem, and according to USRobotics the HST should be even faster if I used Ymodem-G when connected to another HST modem as the error correction will be taken care of by the modem. I didn't use this as the two boards I used for the test do not have Ymodem-G in operation yet. I'm looking forward to trying it out. As you can see, if long distance communicating is your thing, then the HST can save money in time on the phone bill.

As you are reading this, the HST I've got is starting to appear slow compared to newer models. 19,200 baud versions are out and I was impressed as I watched one do a transfer at 1900cps. There are many people still using 300 baud and 1200 baud modems, and many just getting used to their 2400 baud modems, who probably won't want to hear about a new modem. Right now 9600 is not a big deal due to the limited number of BBS using this speed. Only three I can call without calling long distance from Arlington. A fourth will be ready by the time you read this. It's similar to the move in computers, 8 bit to 16 bit to 32 bit. There are a lot of 8 bit machines around with 16 bits moving in rapidly and 32 bits just getting started good. Gosh, 64 bits can't be far away. Bauds and bits -- they are moving right along. I just saw a report of a 38,400 baud modem about to hit the market. This is not going to stop. I hope you enjoyed this small peek at the HST.

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NEW SERVICES

Professional Scan Lab

This month we will be adding Professional Scan Lab to our list of Amiga Services. Pro Scan Lab is an IEEE interface from ASDG that connects the Amiga to a Sharp JX 450 scanner. PSL will scan up to 16.7 million colors at resolutions up to 300 DPI. that may be displayed in the Amigas 4096 color HAM mode resulting in the best digitized images you'll see !

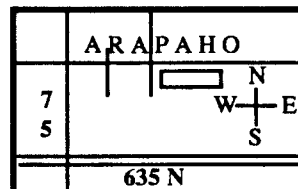
Other Services Include

Amiga Service Center; provides rapid service and parts for all Amigas models.
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ProWrite Version 2.5

An Amiga Software Review by Josh Devan
From Ami Info

ProWrite is a true WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get), multi-font, multi-color, graphic word processor from New Horizons. If you're looking for an easy-to-use, inexpensive word processor that allows you to create documents with IFF images and multiple fonts, then read on. However, if you want a fast and powerful text engine with macros, columns, and the ability to calculate tall equations in a single bound, and pansy color graphics and fonts don't matter to you, then you should probably stick to a text-only powerhouse like Word Perfect.

Before moving on, allow me to bore you with a few personal statistics. My particular system set-up includes an Amiga 1000 with 1.5 megs, two floppy drives, Commodore's 1080 monitor, and a Star NP-10 (an Epson-compatible 9-pin dot matrix printer). My word processing needs are about those of the average high school student; I mainly write two to five page essays, with the occasional report or computer generated letter. Since I rarely need fonts or graphics, I usually prefer using text processors for text and desktop publishing software for graphics. However, when you consider that the combined retail price of Word Perfect (\$395.00) and Professional Page from Gold Disk (\$295.00 with their special introductory offer for version 1.3) is over \$550.00 more than ProWrite (at a reasonable \$124.95), ProWrite becomes an extremely attractive alternative. Also, as I've learned over the past few weeks, there are some things that are easy with ProWrite but could be a formatting nightmare with a DP program.

ProWrite 2.5 comes on two disks, a "System" disk with most of the standard Workbench programs, and a "Program" disk that contains two versions (interlaced and non-interlaced) of ProWrite. Included on these disks are several utilities including a copy of New Horizon's "System Mover" program from their ProFonts I and II packages and a file converter for Textcraft, Scribble, and TextPro files. There is also a slim but well written manual and a three page addendum.

Perhaps the most important feature of ProWrite is that it is truly a WYSIWYG word processor; graphics and fonts appear on the screen exactly as they will be printed. Unfortunately, this is only true of the interlaced version as everything appears twice as high in medium resolution. And, as every experienced Amiga user knows, a standard Amiga "flickers" unbearably in interlaced mode with sharply contrasting colors (like ProWrite's default colors). However, I found the jittery display to be greatly improved by using the "Dim Colors" prefs provided on the "Program" disk.

This brings us neatly to the matter of how ProWrite handles colors. Normally, a color printer will convert the images sent from your Amiga to seven colors (red, green, blue, yellow, magenta, cyan, and black) plus the color of the

paper via dithering techniques where a color is represented by some pattern of these seven colors. ProWrite, however, does these conversions beforehand, which allows you greater flexibility and a clearer idea of what the final output will look like. When loading a graphic image (which can be done with any IFF brush or picture, including those in HAM format) you are presented with several options. There are three levels of "shading", or dithering, and an option to convert the picture to black and white. The "Full" shading option produces pictures with sixteen levels of intensity per picture, the "Partial" option uses four levels of color intensity, and the "None" option uses only the basic seven colors. While we're on the subject of graphics, I should mention that ProWrite allows you to place pictures anywhere, even on top of text, which makes it possible to hand wrap text around pictures. Also, you can size an image horizontally and/or vertically and, by holding down the shift key, you can resize the picture proportionally.

Enough of graphics, it's about time we talked about text. To begin with, you can use any font in any size (and in any combination of the bold, italics, underline, superscript, and subscript styles) as long as it's in the standard Amiga format, and every character can have a different font and a different color. Typing speed, while not as fast as a dedicated text processor, is respectable and is greatly aided by a versatile set of editing short-cuts. On the mousical (what?) side, there are both vertical and horizontal proportional sliders. In addition, ProWrite has implemented what is quickly becoming a standard in mouse response; clicking once places the text cursor while a second click selects the word and a third selects the line. Clicking the mouse while holding down the shift key will select the text from the current text cursor position to the area of the mouse click. ProWrite also has a powerful set of cursor key options: combining the shift and ALT keys with the cursor keys can move you to the beginning of the next or previous word, up or down the length of a screen, to the beginning or end of a line, or to the beginning or end of a document. The control key, when used with any of these combinations or the cursor keys alone, will select text in that direction. You can also delete to the end of a word or line with a shift/ALT and DEL key combination or to the beginning of a word or line with the shift/ALT and back space keys.

Formatting text with ProWrite is predictably easy. There are options for left, center, right, or both left and right justification and single spacing, 1 1/2 spacing, or double spacing between lines. There are headers and footers, which allow page numbers to be inserted as well as any other text, but as of yet there are no options for footnotes or endnotes. Margins and paragraph indentations are set using the ruler which can be displayed in inches, centimeters, 10 pitch, pica, or points. You can also add up to eight tab settings which can be left, center, right, or decimal aligned. Ruler

formats can be copied and pasted between any two paragraphs and even between documents (by the way, ProWrite allows up to eight documents at a time with the ability to cut and paste text and graphics between them). An annoying "feature" of ProWrite is that it forces you to accept the limitations of the average printer; it will not print in the leftmost or rightmost 1/4" and it normally leaves a 1/2" gap between pages. When I tried to fool ProWrite into printing past the margins by selecting a paper width of nine inches, I was shocked (and appalled) to be greeted with the familiar flashing power light of a deceased machine. The crash was so bad in fact that I had to perform a cold boot (by turning the power off and then on again) which is the first time that has ever happened to me. This was the only serious bug I experienced with ProWrite, but it is still inexcusable.

ProWrite allows you to save your document in either the ProWrite format or plain ASCII text, which brings me to another criticism: I personally think that whoever thought of the ProWrite file requester should be tarred and feathered. The requester consists of two boxes, one for directories and one for files, and several gadgets. Two of the gadgets, "Enter" and "Back", allow you to enter a directory and return to it later and a third gadget, "Disk", allows you to search the next disk in its list of possible devices. This pitiful method of switching root directories wouldn't be so bad if ProWrite allowed you to type the full path name of the file in its string requester, but it doesn't. Another tiresome ProWrite habit is that it always searches through all of the files in that directory, and then alphabetizes those files that are in the ProWrite format, before it will display anything. To load a file in any other format, such as ASCII, you have to hold down the ALT key while choosing the "Open..." menu item, something I always forget to do until it's too late.

In the category of miscellaneous functions, ProWrite also includes a 100,000+ (not including the user dictionary) word spelling checker, a "Document Information" requester, a search function, and the ability to perform mail merges. The spell checker is fairly quick because of some intelligent programming (like remembering the last 1000 words checked) but it is only able to check from the beginning of the file on. The "Document Information" requester includes such statistics as the number of words, character, and sentences in your document, as well as several others.

Finally, one last bug and an overview of the changes in version 2.5. I often experienced stray garbage on my screen, in the form of small dotted lines and other random designs, while using ProWrite. While this is hardly a fatal flaw, it is something of a nuisance and should be cleaned up.

ProWrite 2.5 is an upgrade to version 2.0 and offers several improvements and additions. The most significant of these is the ability to use your printer in Draft or NLQ mode and print pictures at the same time. This is much faster than the standard graphic dump of all fonts and images, although not as fast as printing pure text, and can result in some impressive documents depending upon the quality of your printer's default font. The main drawback to this feature is that you must use the Topaz-11 font

throughout your document for proper spacing.

Other new features (as paraphrased from the ProWrite Addendum) include:

- * Faster typing speed.
- * Adjustable page size - Previous versions offered only 4 preset sizes.
- * Print density - You can now select the print density (in dots per inch) from within ProWrite as opposed to flipping back and forth between ProWrite and Preferences.
- * No gaps between pages - ProWrite usually includes a 1/2 inch margin on the top and bottom of each page.
- * Insert date and time - You can now insert the date and/or time anywhere in your document. This information can either be fixed or updated every time you open the document.
- * Date and time formats - There are now six different date formats and two different time formats (12 or 24 hour).
- * Centered tab stops.
- * Text files - When saving or loading standard text (ASCII) files, you can now choose whether to save/load line-feeds after every line or every paragraph. This is especially useful for converting text files from bulletin-board services.
- * Show/hide ruler - The ruler used to be a permanent ProWrite fixture, but you can now show and hide it at will.
- * Document information - The "Document Information" requester (which will be discussed later) has been enhanced with The addition of a sentence count, the average word length (in characters), and the average sentence length (in words).
- * Faster spell checking - New Horizons claims the spelling checker is up to twice as fast on floppy-based systems. The vocabulary of the spelling checker has also been increased to over 100,000 words.
- * "Spell check as you type" option - This feature causes ProWrite to beep and flash every time you type a word not in its dictionary.

ProWrite 2.5 has also undergone several cosmetic changes and added a few new utilities.

From the ProWrite Addendum -

"ProWrite 2.5 is available now directly from New Horizons Software, Inc. for \$20.00 to all registered ProWrite 2.0 owners and \$30.00 to all registered ProWrite 1.0 and 1.1 owners. A shipping charge of \$5.00 for domestic orders and \$10.00 for foreign orders is added to the upgrade price. ProWrite 2.5 requires Kickstart 1.2."

In conclusion, I think that ProWrite is a reasonable alternative to the intimidating and expensive IBM rehashes (read Word Perfect). It is simple and intuitive to learn and use, and very affordably priced compared to other word processors. While it doesn't have much text editing power over and above the standard word processing features, it does offer a true WYSIWYG display and color graphics and fonts. Aside from a few isolated complaints, I am pleased with ProWrite and would recommend it to anyone looking for a new word processor.

Amiga By-The-Loop

Brent Wood

Forty people turned out for our November meeting. It was these forty who voted the new slate of club officers into office for the coming year.

Since no new nominations for chapter officers were made, the following volunteers were presented to the membership as the slate for next year.

President	David Owens
Treasurer	Bruce Nelson
Secretary	Brent Wood
Librarian	Gary Campbell

As you can see, the Vice President position has no volunteer or nomination. Thus far the President and secretary have agreed to perform the duties of VP until such time as a person can be found to fill the spot. Those duties include selecting and arranging demonstrations for the monthly chapter meetings. Any help or suggestions from the membership will be greatly appreciated.

Many new rumors and information was available during the gossip session of the meeting. A

big surprise was word of a price reduction from Commodore on the Amiga line. Also word of the Amiga being sold in Sears stores and catalogues.

(Yet another place to look for

a problem with a piece of hardware or software.

Our presentation included the showing of a video tape from Commodore showing footage that closely mirrors the print ads that they are currently running in magazines like Time and Newsweek. This tape may show up at dealers. We also looked at a demo disk from Commodore. Don't be surprised to see this at a showroom real soon. Copies of the disk are available from the club library. If you've been looking for something to show off your computer to your friends, this may be what you want.

Scott Lamb took over with a discussion of batch files on the Amiga and reviewed some of the CLI commands used in the StartUp-Sequence of every Workbench disk that comes with an Amiga. Ways to speed up your startup were shown as were ways to create a custom environment. Time did not permit Scott to go into all the ins and outs of batch files and CLI commands. This is a large area to cover. Maybe we could get Scott to write a series of articles for the newsletter. I left with the intention of exploring all the options that I haven't yet considered. Thanks Scott.

This month we will formally elect officers for the chapter. Be there and exercise your right to make the club as good as it can be. December 12 at 7:30 pm. The new year looks like the year of the Amiga. Lets help to make it that way.

Amiga Central

Bill Raecke

It was a great meeting. Early in the evening we were told of the price rollback on Amiga 2000 products.

The list price of an Amiga 2000 will be reduced by \$300. The 2500 price will be reduced even more. There will also be a new Amiga 2500-030 based on the 68030 chip. The price for this model will be the same as the 2500-020 price was

until now. This is great news for people like be who are preparing to upgrade.

There were also rumors of an Amiga laptop model. No confirmation on this one yet but perhaps we will hear more at the next meeting.

The presentation for the evening was CanDo by Inovatronics. I've been wondering for quite some time now just what CanDo was. I first had the opportunity to see it at Amazing Computers but the crowds were so large that I really couldn't get a look. Then it was demoed at METCOM*89 but I was out taking care of business and missed that one too. So this wound up being my first look at it. Now I understand why, when I asked someone "What is CanDo?", I never got a straight answer. The product is so wonderful and so innovative that the terminology hasn't been invented yet that describes it. If I had to give a description, I would say it was a programming language for people who don't know how to program. If you have something you have been wanting your computer to do but the software doesn't exist, CanDo can do it.

CanDo designs buttons. Those buttons can be used to control sounds, pictures, brush-anims, or any other tasks you desire. It can be used to time events to coincide with each other. A paint program and a text editor are built in. Events are controlled by a powerful script language -- but the script can be created by pointing and clicking. Thereafter you may edit it if you wish with the text editor. As a final touch, the applications created with CanDo may be saved either as CanDo files (which allows for more changes later and very small file sizes) or as stand-alone applications which can be run on any Amiga -- even one without CanDo.

CanDo does some things that I have not seen done before. It really makes the Amiga shine. How about running multiple brush-anims simultaneously? Or how about an animated button? CanDo can do it.

CanDo is far too big a program to be reviewed here in the chapter news section. Look for a full review in this

that elusive game?) This is something that you miss when you miss a meeting. Also a lot of help if you have

newsletter as soon as it hits the market.

In December, our meeting will feature games. In keeping with the spirit of things, Scott Lamb will be on hand representing Telegames. There will be a special price on these products that night. Come pick up a copy for \$9.95. See you there.

Amiga North Dallas Genny White

Our new chapter's organizational meeting welcomed a roomful of enthusiastic Amiga owners to the club. After greetings from Craig Bird, we enjoyed meeting Commodore's Field Training Representative Vernon Graner. He shared with us news about Commodore's new policies of dealer and customer support, including the hiring of "People Like Us", real Amiga owners and users as consultants and engineers. Vernon also discussed the new advertising program and expanded budget. (Tapes and schedules for the commercials are viewable at the Dealers!) Since most home computer sales are in December, Commodore is concentrating on that market initially, and other markets will be addressed after the holidays. No

Earth-Shaking Secrets were revealed about Workbench 1.4 or the anticipated Amiga 3000, as they are still VERY tightly guarded

company secrets.

Although
Vernon
is

based
in
Austin,
we'll see him
again from time
to time, and he can
be reached with
questions and

suggestions through our dealers. He also has available persuasive "comparative propaganda" to show your Amiga-considering friends, and has access to the highest levels of technical people to solve any problem that can't be resolved locally.

Then down to business: we elected officers for our chapter by unanimous finger-pointing, and officially accepted the name "Amiga North Dallas". Our officers for this year will be... President: Craig Bird, Vice President: William Dockendorf, Secretary/Reporter: Genny White, Treasurer: Lois Robinson, and Librarian: Brett Hester. Our group is seeking a permanent meeting place and time in the North Dallas area. For now, our next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 13th, at 8 p.m., at the Fretz Park Recreation Building, 6990 Belt Line Road at Hillcrest (next door to our last meeting location). George Heyser of Metropolitan Computing will be on hand to present a demo on desktop publishing.

See you then, or sooner at the Christmas Party!

Arlington/ GP Eddie Allen

The Saturday workshop is still active, and we are more than ready to help anyone that wants or needs it. This meeting is a good place to hone your skills and participate in mutual enrichment.

Tuesday's meeting on the 21st contained a myriad collection of new products available. Ranging from the new RamLink from the JiffyDOS people, to an educational C64/128 networking solution. Glen Herring continues to collect and disseminate these tidbits of welcome hardware and software support for our chosen platform of computerization.

Gerald Roberts demonstrated a stock/commodity market trend analysis package from Abacus called the Technical Analysis System (TAS). By faithfully entering daily figures on the

market components that you are interested in tracking, you will be rewarded with the capability to display and/or print several standardized analysis charts. The maximum reachback range is about 6 months, but since the normal range is from 5 to 45 days, this is more than adequate. The normal algorithms are used, with several bonus ones added. This program has received a top rating from Gerald.

I must apologize to Janet Hamm for reporting that she was in tonight's program. She actually will be the highlight of the December meeting, demonstrating her biorhythm program. Perhaps I was chilled out too much.

In December we will also vote on the nominations for our 1990 officers, which are as follows:

President	Glen Herring
Vice President	Jim Souba
Treasurer	Blake Brown
Secretary/Reporter	Eddie Allen
Librarian	Jerry Hiatt

Here's hoping everyone has a happy and bountiful Thanksgiving, and we hope to see everyone in December.

Fort Worth Ellen Triplett

To those who may have wondered why the list of officers for this chapter stated my name as Secretary/Reporter, and yet since February the column has been written and submitted by Mary Louise Hagemeyer -- a short word of explanation: She very kindly accepted the responsibility and did the work I was unable to do during the extended critical illness and subsequent death of my mother. We are fortunate to have members who are not only capable, but willing to step in and support each other's needs, not only in computer knowledge, but in cases of personal problems such as mine. My thanks to her. Now all I need is time to try to regain the small amount of expertise I had before, and catch up on all the things that have happened during my absence.

Our last meeting was held on

Saturday, Nov. 11. Rich Meyer brought us up to date on the events discussed at the executive meeting, and presented the slate of nominees for chapter officers which we normally have received and voted on at the previous meeting (cancelled to make way for METCOM). We will have a brief special chapter meeting during the Christmas party Dec. 2 to vote on our 1990 chapter officers. Please be there to participate in this meeting and to have the opportunity to be with members from the other chapters whom we may not have seen or talked to since our last get-together.

Our librarian reminded us that we have 6 new disks available to us (#'s 526 thru 5231) ranging from Trivia and various games to DOS programs and a Superbase useful for church records, etc.

Jim Marshall gave us a 1 liner for the C64 and Mary Louise Hagemeyer one for the 128. Rich Meyer discussed the possibility of starting a local bi-monthly workshop where we could bring our equipment and any problems we may be having. Boy, do I need this! Possibly there are others out there, club wide, who are new members or like me, have lost a chunk of time and need to start or restart using their computers more. Call

Rich if you need more information on this.

Hank Costello, owner of Budget Computers in Arlington (corner of New York & Park Row) presented a video

program using the C64 and a camcorder. He commented on software available - stating that Video Title

Shop by DataSoft is NOT very user friendly, while Slide Show Creator is the friendliest.

He also discussed choosing a modem (be sure it has full duplex operation; will it fit your computer or must you use an interface, etc.).

By the way, if you are unaware of it, Budget Computers does have a free Bulletin Board available. The number is 817-261-6352. Probably most of you already know all this info if you've been attending your regular monthly meetings, but for new members and those like me, it's nice to know.

Hope to see all of you at our Christmas party and don't forget to bring something in the way of refreshments. I may get around to making a batch of my hand-dipped chocolates. They went like hot cakes the last time I brought them. If I do, I will also bring copies of the recipe for those who like to make their own. See you there.

HEB Robyn Wilson

November's meeting was full of business and education involving our chapter. The business side involved Eldor Luedtke, Jr. talking about the MCCC Survey for hardware and software. Members need to fill the form out as best they can and submit them to me or any other officer. The Board of Directors were listed and our chapter was all in favor of the nominations. Our officers for the year 1990 for the HEB chapter are as follows:

President	Eldor Luedtke, Jr.
Vice President	Jon Moreland
Secretary	Robyn Wilson
Treasurer	Bill Howe
Librarian	Curtis Crago

Continuing on, Eldor, Jr. mentioned that there needs to be more usage on the Graphics bulletin board (268-4196). Members need to at least sign on and say "hi". Talk about your computer

problems or any items of interest whether computer-related or not. You may get a response that will help you out.

Motions were made and passed to hold meetings at the NRH Public Library in North Richland Hills on the first of the month. If this is to go into effect, you will be notified by mail by the club. If you do not receive any notice go to the Hurst Recreation Center on the third Saturday of the month (December 16th), as planned.

As for the newsletter, everyone is urged to give some "input" for articles to the newsletter. Whether it is introducing software or hardware or just describing a game or utility, write up something and submit it to the editor. In the newsletter on the last page, there is a section called "The Fine Print" that explains some of the facts for submitting an article.

December 2nd is the MCCC Christmas Party at the Meadowbrook National Bank on 6707 Brentwood Stair Road in Fort Worth. The time is from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., but the doors will close at 3:00 P.M. This is a fun event to attend!

Finally, the main program was presented. Eldor Luedtke, Jr. discussed and illustrated disk drives. He began by opening up a 1541 drive (C64) and a 1571 drive (C128). As he talked he gave a pro's view of how these drives are made up. He discussed how you can make your drive into an '8' or '9' drive in order to copy. These drive numbers are important as they match the source disk or destination disk to either a '8' or '9'.

The 1571 drive is different than the 1541 in that it uses both sides of the diskette, doubling the storage capacity of the drive without changing sides manually. The 1571 drive can still read a single sided disk that was written on a 1541 drive. It also has a switch to change device numbers.

The 1581 drive was shown to hold more information and run a lot faster than the other drives. It enables a person to put what would normally require several 5 1/4" disks onto one disk that is only 3 1/2" wide. A program that makes good use of the 1581 is Geos. This saves both time and effort.

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The Fine Print

The Mid-Cities Commodore Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business. Appropriate and legal use of all types of software is encouraged by this club.

The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Our meetings are open to all. Membership dues are \$20 per year or \$12 for six months and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC ASCII and Graphic bulletin board systems.

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The MCCC News accepts advertising from both members and from commercial establishments. Member advertising is free but must not be of a commercial nature. A commercial ad is defined as one where multiple like items are available for sale to anyone. Members submitting such ads are subject to commercial rates. Commercial rates for camera-ready ads are as follows for a single month or (consecutive three months): full page - \$30 (\$81), half page - \$15 (\$40), quarter page - \$10 (\$27), business card - \$5 (\$13). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy.

The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is the Monday following the third Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail to P.O. Box 813, Bedford, Texas 76095.

Calendar of Events

Dec 9 Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
 1:30 PM - Grand Prairie Library
 Louis Nailor, 214-262-4576

Dec 12 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
 7:30 PM - N.Richland Hills Church of Christ
 Brent Wood, 817-246-3707

Dec 13 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
 8:00 PM - Fretz Park Recreation Building
 Craig Bird, 817-540-3360

Dec 16 Hurst-Euless-Bedford Chapter
 1:30 PM - Hurst Recreation Center
 Eldor Luedtke, Jr., 817-626-0518

Dec 19 Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
 7:00 PM - Arlington Community Center
 Glen Herring, 817-572-0489

Dec 21 Amiga Central Chapter
 7:30 PM - Arlington Community Center
 Bill Keatley, 817-485-0666

Jan 6 MCCC Board of Directors
 10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
 Ned Kelly, 817-277-5825

Note →

January Newsletter Deadline - December 11



Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Sat MCCC Board of Directors
 2nd Tues Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
 2nd Sat Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop

2nd Sat Fort Worth Chapter
 3rd Tues Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
 3rd Thurs Amiga Central Chapter
 3rd Sat HEB Chapter

MCCC NEWS

Mid-Cities Commodore Club
 P.O. Box 813
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